

LBJ believed U.S. responsible for 2 assassinations

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WASHINGTON—Former President Lyndon B. Johnson indicated several times that the United States was directly responsible for the assassinations of Dominican Republic dictator Rafael J. Trujillo and South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, associates of Johnson said Monday.

The associates also said Johnson repeatedly expressed the suspicion that the late President John F. Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy and was not killed by a gunman acting alone as the Warren commission concluded.

The associates insisted, however, that Johnson did not mention the Central Intelligence Agency in either connection.

CBS News reported Friday that President Ford has been told of at least three CIA assassinations of foreign officials and that he ordered "extreme caution" to prevent the embarrassing disclosure of such incidents in current investigations.

The Sun-Times was told Monday that the CIA had maintained links in the past with the underworld, but intelligence officials cautioned against concluding that the agency hired gangsters as assassins.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, as The Sun-Times disclosed then, the CIA had a connection with Chicago gang boss Sam Giancana.

The CIA reportedly sought to exploit Giancana's former gambling network in Cuba

against Prime Minister Fidel Castro. In return, a detective agency acting as a front for the CIA bugged the Las Vegas hotel room of a singer and girl friend of Giancana at his request.

Earlier, during Castro's visit to the United Nations in 1960, high-ranking New York City policemen said CIA agents approached them with a plan to kill him by placing a box of exploding cigars within his reach. Later, the policemen said, agents told them the plan had been called off.

After the CBS report, CIA officials were quoted as admitting that there had been such assassination talk at a lower level but it was not approved at the top.

Johnson reportedly made his remarks about Trujillo and Diem in the first few weeks after Kennedy's assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

Associates said Johnson's first reaction to Kennedy's death was that it might have been some type of Communist plot. Later, he reportedly declared—without amplification—that "we" took care of Trujillo and Diem and that perhaps Kennedy's assassination represented some kind of terrible retribution.

Trujillo was killed in 1961 and Diem in 1963, both in military coups. The United States never has acknowledged responsibility for either assassination, but the Pentagon papers revealed that the CIA was in close contact with the generals who overthrew Diem, and former President Richard M. Nixon declared in 1971 that there was U.S. "complicity" in his

assassination.

The Johnson associates said he repeatedly expressed doubt that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy. David W. Belin, executive director of the Rockefeller commission on the CIA, insisted again Friday that only Oswald was involved.

But Sherwood Ross, a public relations man for several major magazines, said that next Monday one of his clients will produce "new scientific findings" showing that Oswald told the truth when he denied killing anyone in Dallas that day.

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